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THE PATTERN OF RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

by

M.M. Thomas

Report from the Christian Consultation held at Allahabad Agricultural Institute, India, September 25-30, 1956 under the auspices of the Allahabad Agricultural Institute and the National Christian Council of India. The consultation consisted of about forty people from different parts of India, most of them engaged in educational, social or religious work in the Indian villages or in the training of such village workers. There were also some who were academic in their training as economists, sociologists and theologians.

The first part consisting of Report and Evaluation was written by M.M. Thomas and the last part consisting of three Findings were products of three commissions.

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THE PATTERN OF RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

By M.M. Thomas

The Allahabad Consultation 1956

Report and Evaluation

The Purpose - to Define a Christian Mind

Early in January this year, an Ecumenical Christian Conference on "A Socialistic Pattern of Society" was held in Bombay. Following this Conference a three-year Plan of Study of some of India's social questions by the Churches was launched by the Ecumenical Commission of the National Christian Council of India. The Bombay Conference selected some topics for further study in the area of rural community development. The Allahabad Consultation was an attempt to follow up Bombay in the study of these topics.

Therefore, the purpose of the Consultation was (1) to evaluate ideas and practices in village service from the social, economic and Christian angles, (2) to define more clearly a Christian mind regarding the objectives and techniques of a healthy pattern of rural community development in India and (3) to think out the role of the Church, Christian agencies and individual Christians in rural service today.

Organization

The Consultation was held under the joint auspices of the National Christian Council and the Allahabad Agricultural Institute. It was convened by Rev. J.W. Sadiq secretary of the NCC Ecumenical Commission, Principal H.S. Azariah of the Allahabad Agricultural Institute and myself holding executive responsibility for the Bombay follow-up study on social questions. After the preliminary announcement of the Consultation in May, the conveners met in Allahabad early in August and planned the same. Principal Azariah was kind enough to invite the Consultation to the Institute and take full responsibility for its physical organization. The Consultation had the hearty cooperation of the staff of the Institute and the use of its administrative machinery.

Topics for Study

Three topics were selected for study at this Consultation.

1. Social Goals. What should be the social goals of village community development in India, immediately and ultimately? In the light of our national ideals of a secular democratic State and a socialistic pattern of society, what is the pattern of changes we should envisage in village social institutions and organi ation? On the basis of our understanding of the inter-relation of religion, culture and social and economic institutions in village, what kind of religious and cultural motivation would be necessary for the development of such a pattern? Evaluate the success and failure of different development agencies at work in regard to providing this motivation. What is the contribution of the Church and Christian agencies?

2. Economic Pattern. Definition of the pattern of economic development of the village and its relation to the socialist pattern of national economic development. Evaluation of the role of land-reforms, cooperation and cottage and small-scale industries in a developing rural economy on the one hand and the national plan on the other. The religious cultural social and other hindrances to rural economic development and the possibilities of new incentives.

3. State Initiative, Voluntary Effort and Foreign Assistance. Role and limits of State and voluntary action in rural community development work in India. The specific role of the Church. What are the areas of village community development work where the impact of foreign assistance is healthy or undesirable from the point of view of social goals? Indicate specifically with respect to foreig money and foreign personnel separately, what forms of such assistance are creative in the light of experience.

The Conference

The Chairman. "Dick" Keithahn, veteran village worker and Secretary of the South India Rural Fellowship and till recently working in the Gandhi Gram of South India, chaired the Consultation. He gave a spiritual tone to the deliberations. Though the immediate purpose of the Consultation was study, he kept reminding the participants that the study was meant for more significant action at the village level. He brought to the Consultation the challenge of a life of daring Christian participation with Sarvodaya and other movements of national regeneration in India.

A Ferment of Ideas. The five addresses which came one after the other in the course of a day and a half in the beginning of the Consultation were meant to bring the Consultation a consciousness of the world-wide and national setting in which the Christian responsibility for thought and action was set. The speakers were the best suited to raise the crucial issues in the discussions at the world and national levels on the pattern of rural community development. The Chairman gave the opening talk on the theme of the Consultation. Professor Dr. de Vries, Chairman of the Department on Church and Society of the World Council of Churches and Rector of the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague addressed the Consultation on "The Three Topics seen from a World-wide Point of View". He was formerly professor of Tropical Agricultural Economics in Wageningen, Dean of the Agricultural Faculty in Djakarta and till recently Chief of the Agricultural Division of the World Bank. Dr. de Vries brought his ecumenical perspective both Christian and secular to bear on the topics and indicated the trends of thinking on rural development at the international level. The other addresses were on "Economic Pattern of Rural Development" by Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, Director of the Delhi School of Economics, on "Social Goals of Rural Development" by Professor Rajkrishnan of New Delhi, an economist and sociologist, and on "State Initiative, Voluntary Effort and Foreign Assistance" by Principal Azariah. The issues of the national debate were sharply focussed through the speeches. In fact it is no exaggeration to say that the national debate took place on the Consultation platform in a miniature scale. Rev. R. Keithahn, the Sarvodaya enthusiast for Gram Raj, Dr. Rao, the economist advocating the necessity of consciously destroying the stagnation of village self-sufficiency for the sake of economic progress and Prof. Rajkrishnan, sociologist pleading for a pattern of economic and social decentralization in the name of mental and social health and the discussions that followed these talks clinched with fervour and passion the issue between Sarvodaya and Capitalist-Socialist approaches to the pattern of village development. Principal Azariah raised a whole series of questions and commented on the role and limits of State action in rural community development, again a topic which is much disputed on the national scene. These talks and discussions produced what was intended by them, namely a ferment of ideas.

Development of a Common Mind. The two days following the speeches were given wholly to the meeting of the three Commissions, each engaged in further consideration of one of the topics, and to evolve something of a common and ordered mind on the topics. And the Commissions did their job well under good leadership.

The Commission of Social Goals:

Chairman: Dr. T.A. Koshy, Special Officer (Social Education) of the Ministry of Community Projects, New Delhi.

Secretary: Mr. A.P. Barnabas, Department of Rural Sociology, Allahabad Agricultural Institute.

The Commission on Economic Pattern:

Chairman: Dr. C.M. Chatterjee, Principal, Holland Hall, University of Allahabad.

Secretary: Mr. M.J. John, Agricultural Principal, Agricultural Institute, Katpadi.

The Commission on State Initiative, Voluntary Effort and Foreign Assistance:

Chairman: Principal H.S. Azariah, Allahabad Agricultural Institute.

Secretary: Mr. Philip Zealey, American Friends Service Committee, Delhi.

The three statements produced by the Commissions were taken up in the plenary sessions of the Consultation. The last day and a half were given to redrafting the Commission findings by all the participants of the Consultation together. It was hard work with sub-committees doing the redrafting of various sections where sharp differences emerged in the discussions.

The Findings published in this Report express the general consensus of the Consultation on the three topics taken up for study. There are many loose ends in the Findings. And dogmatists may find the sharp edges blunted a great deal. But the participants of the Consultation had no doubt that the attempt to evolve a common mind was worthwhile.

Devotions. The Chairman led the opening and closing services. On other days, different members of the Consultation led the morning and evening devotions in a formal or informal way as each one thought fit. One evening, the Consultation members joined the weekly staff prayer meeting of the Institute for a period of fellowship in thought and prayer. On Sunday morning, the members joined different Church services in the neighbourhood.

Two Features

Two features of the Consultation are worth mentioning. First, the impact of ecumenical social thinking on the Consultation. That impact was made visible at Allahabad through the presence and contribution of Prof. de Vries, the chairman of the Working Committee of the Department on Church and Society of the World Council of Churches. Also the statement on "Changing Village Society" prepared at Herrenalb, Germany last summer by a WCC international group (now published in the second pamphlet of "the Common Christian Responsibility Toward Areas of Rapid Social Change") was not only a paper for preparatory reading for the participants but was also read, discussed and criticised from an Indian Christian angle at a plenary session. Incidentally it is my feeling that this study programme has made an interchange between national Christian groups and the study department of the World Council a great deal more real.

Second, the contribution of non-Christians to the thinking of the Consultation. Two of the main speakers, Dr. Rao and Prof. Rajkrishnan brought the impact not only of their technical economic and sociological knowledge, but also their understanding of man as a being with trans-social ends and loyalties to the deliberations. Prof. Rajkrishnan especially dealt with the role of the Church in social development and warned against making religion a means; social values should serve the religious destiny of man and should be judged in the light of that destiny. The Church to be of real service to social development should remain the Church with roots and ends transcending society. He almost said, "Let the Church be the Church". This caution against reducing Christianity to a social ideology was well given and well taken.

These two friends could not stay on for the Commission meetings. But a few non-Christian friends, Messrs. Kanungo, Jain and others, did enter fully into the group discussions and contributed in no small measure to their outcome. No doubt they shared fully in the give and take of scientific technical knowledge and the discussion on social values. My impression was that they participated also in the deliberations at a deeper spiritual level, including those dealing with the problems of religious motivation for rural community development.

It should be possible to develop techniques of non-Christian participation in a Christian consultation, which on the one hand, does not reduce their contribution to the terms of technical questions and social values, and on the other hand, does not make the Consultation itself to become theologically neutral or religiously syncretistic. These techniques are not yet in sight. I hope, however, that we shall be able to draw upon the wisdom of the Hindu and secular thinkers and scientists more and more in our study programme.

Evaluation

There is no doubt that the significance of the Consultation as felt and expressed by the participants lay much more in the effect the Christian fellowship of thought and the process of common study had on them subjectively, than in the objective value of the Findings produced. The give and take of "democratic procedures" in the common effort of a group to evolve a general consensus breaks dogmatism and stimulates thought among the members. "It was good", writes a Western friend, "to see the vigorous efforts to promote widely different ideas and the frank discussion of points of similarity and difference in the views of participants". And he adds, "Many such conferences dealing with important topics of the type through the years ahead will serve a most useful purpose, I am sure. Efforts might be made to bring in new people as participants from time to time, although there are some advantages in keeping individual discussion groups down to about the size of those this time".

The educational value of the Consultation cannot be the sole criterion of judging its significance. As part of a study programme it must also be evaluated in terms of the ideas it has produced. Indeed the Findings of the Consultation are the result of a piece of Christian group thinking by people involved in rural community development projects. One does not know what objective value they will have in the life of the Church and the Nation. But the participants considered them of real value in their own work in the villages and in the training of rural workers.

Follow-up. Foremost among the criticisms of the Consultation was the unfortunate fact that the number of women present was very small. It created a serious flaw in the thinking of the whole Consultation, for woman (as Mrs. Fisher

rightly emphasised) is the psyche of every civilization and is the psychic factor in every social change; she is the mother not only of the new generations but also of the society of tomorrow. The smallness of the number of women was not due to lack of invitations to women, but to the small response from them. Whatever be the reason, the criticism is well taken. And in any follow-up of the study, therefore, effort should be made to get the reaction of women engaged in rural work.

Regarding other aspects of the follow-up. Already at the closing meeting of the Consultation there was talk of organizing a North Indian Christian Consultation on the same theme, in the Hindi language to facilitate more village level participation. The South India Rural Fellowship is an ongoing concern, and comments and criticisms from them of the findings of Allahabad will be forthcoming. Several members of the Consultation promised to continue the thinking process at the regional level; and I have already received letters indicating the steps some of them have taken to fulfil their word. For instance, one member has reported on plans by the Standing Committee for Rural Work of a Church for organizing "study groups for the circle chairmen and heads of institutions" of the Diocese. Some of the participants have brought the thinking to their own colleagues and students in rural training institutions.

Findings

I. Economic Pattern of Development

Introduction

The pattern of community development in its economic aspect was considered by the Consultation. We examined the existing economic pattern of the village community taking into account the changes that are induced by forces such as the urban impact, national plans which make economic gains by way of cash and kind easily available, and the constitutional and other provisions which give special material benefits to the backward classes and the village masses. The village people are becoming conscious of the economic developments in the country, but they are not aware of the ways and means of drawing these benefits to their advantage. The tendency to support secular and non-religious activities is on the increase. Comforts and modern amenities are increasingly becoming the objects of attraction for the village people. A desire for better living is growing.

The social barrier which prevented occupational change is breaking, providing opportunity for horizontal and vertical mobility. Joint-family and caste are being undermined by the new trends in the economic and social life such as individual initiative, desire to enjoy the fruits of personal achievement, migration to the cities, etc. Social security offered by these social institutions is disappearing. Government plans and acts of legislatures are providing opportunities for consolidation of holdings, reducing pressure on agricultural land by providing alternative appointments in industries and gainful employments in developmental programmes. The self-sufficiency of villages is being broken by the impact of the specialization of industries, cash crops, urban markets, improved transport and communication facilities on rural economy.

It is in this context that we are to consider the pattern of economic development of rural community. Plans and programmes of development with crores of rupees and highly qualified technical skill at their command are meaningless

unless there are purposeful men and women to do the work. Human beings are the basic and the most important factor in any such programme.

Changes are taking place and the present task is to control and direct them to bring about desirable ends.

Inefficient means of agricultural production must be improved with the best of technical "know-how". Efforts must be made to provide opportunities for education and employment for people in the rural society. Village life should be revitalised and made attractive and meaningful so that the best in its value-system may be preserved, and skilled and educated people may find incentives to stay in the village.

Pattern of Economic Development

It is not conducive to the health of the nation to have cities and villages patterned on completely different principles. There must be integration between them, socially and economically. A rural-cum-urban community with a rural-urban economy may be the goal of village development under the modern conditions of change. Democratic panchayats hold a bright future in realising this goal.

The pattern of the economic development of the village in integral relation to the socialist pattern of national economic development should envisage:

(a) the revitalization of the rural community by drawing what is best in the scientific "know-how" and technical skill to have maximum production (with due consideration to the conservation of natural resources for future generations) and optimum utilization of goods produced (producing the maximum social good);

(b) so that benefits of large scale investments of the State may increasingly be available to the villages in terms of higher standards of living;

(c) the development of production techniques and economic organization should be of such character as to keep unemployment and under-employment at its minimum providing alternative gainful employment and furthering occupational mobility;

(d) and such that the dislocation in the existing social value-system of the village does not leave a vacuum but is substituted by a more adequate one conducive to the new urges of freedom, equality and material welfare, and preserving the values of the organic contact with nature and relationship with neighbour and God.

Land Reforms

The abolition of Zamindari and intermediaries has created in the new land-owning class a sense of security which provides an incentive for improving the land. This change has made the non-cultivating owners to take interest in cultivating their land out of fear of losing it further under legislation laying down ceilings on land holdings.

The ex-landlords are dissatisfied with the compensation allowed to them and the fear of debt-legislation prevents them from investing whatever cash they have left with them in giving loans to the small land-owners who need loans. Thus the farmer finding it almost impossible to obtain loans from the ex-landlords is thinking more and more in terms of applying for "takkavi" loans from

the Government agencies. The Government has provision for such loans, but the machinery moves much too cumbersomely to provide loans as and when needed. The amount of "takkavi" loans is generally inadequate and the expenditure of time and money involved in procuring the loan is beyond the means of an average farmer. He is thus driven in his desperation to apply to the ruthless money-lender.

Landless labour presents another serious problem. Avenues of work on land are fast diminishing, partly due to change in techniques. The Minimum Wage Acts relating to agricultural labour are of little use in finding continuous employment for such people. A careful study of the extent of this evil, its economic and moral consequences and the remedies thereof seems to be a call of the hour. The programme of settlement of such landless unemployed persons on reclaimed cultivable waste and cultivable forest land ought to be accelerated without delay to avoid the growth of petty and major offences in the country. We recognize the tremendous value and potentialities of the Bhoodan movement for this purpose.

The Bhoodan movement plays a very vital role in the social and moral life of this country in challenging land-owners to share a part of their possessions with their poor and needy brethren; and the Christian Church, all over the country, ought to do everything possible to aid and succour this movement.

It is also our opinion that sufficient publicity is not being given to the plans and methods employed in distributing land. A greater degree of public and State cooperation in this respect will undoubtedly enhance the prestige and the effectiveness of the movement.

This voluntary movement is creating an atmosphere for desirable legislation in land-reforms. Such legislation is necessary to carry forward a revolution in land-tenure, based on the principle of "land-to-the-tiller". The urgency of this has yet to be fully appreciated.

Cooperation

Since 1904 when the first Cooperative Act came into existence and the foundation of Cooperation was laid in this country, the credit aspect of Cooperation has made rapid progress. Due to lack of flexibility in the organizational and administrative pattern of the Cooperative movement in India, its usefulness has not fully been appreciated by the people. The educational and extension aspects of Cooperatives should be increased greatly. "All for each and each for all" concept of Cooperatives and the voluntary nature of their organization can be realised only by proper social education. The service aspect should be stressed so that the social gain of participation is not sacrificed to individualistic gain and vested interest. Enough flexibility should be provided in the Act and the Bye-laws, so that they do not stand in the way of efficient working of the organization, e.g. nothing should bar an interested and able secretary from being a paid employee. Cooperatives should be able to function without too much government interference. All educational institutions, especially the "Nai Talim" (Basic education) should incorporate education for cooperation in their curriculum.

Multi-purpose Cooperative Societies and Mutual-aid Societies have proved to be successful in certain parts of the country. Pilot research schemes to investigate social conditions necessary for successful Cooperation should be initiated. Where voluntary organizations have given close supervision, taking personal interest in societies, Cooperatives of all kinds have proved beneficial.

We are products of an economic pattern where the awareness of common good is not realised. Cooperatives in India have worked mainly in the medium economic levels, completely ignoring the lower strata where it is mostly needed. Women, on whom several activities of developing the village economy depend, should have an increasingly big part in the Cooperative movement.

In the changing economic pattern, Cooperatives can play a tremendous part in building not only strong economic institutions with local initiative, but also a democracy which will stand the withering attacks of any "ism".

Village and Small-scale Industries

The Consultation emphasised the necessity, in a developing economy for:

(a) Supplementary cottage industries to occupy a farmer's spare time, the products of which will be easily saleable and will not deteriorate if left unfinished for some time.

(b) Improvement of existing village and small-scale industries which require specialised training.

(c) New types of small-scale industries with specialized techniques of production, and using power.

In estimating the role of village and small-scale industries in a developing rural economy, we have the problem of maintaining a balance between efficiency of production and security of employment. On the one hand, in the attempt to develop village and small-scale industries to reduce unemployment, stagnation and loss of productive efficiency will result. On the other hand, in introducing higher techniques to increase productive efficiency, many will be thrown out of work. Without more efficient techniques of production, there cannot be economic development. Dislocation in the security of employment is inevitable for the sake of development. But it should be reduced to the very minimum. Better production techniques should be introduced in such a way that it is possible to absorb those who are thrown out of work by such innovations, into alternative employment, within reasonable time. For example, introduction of power to hand-looms is no doubt a desirable line of progressive action; but the question as to when it is justifiable should be answered in the light of the estimated capacity of the national economy to employ those who will become unemployed due to this change of technique.

Facilities should not be provided to the large-scale industries at the expense of efficient and desirable cottage and small-scale industries. Heavy subsidies to small industries enabling them to compete in the open market, does not appear to be a wise policy. Specific spheres of production for example, when assigned to hand-loom industry, may work better than subsidies.

Agro-industries (industries subsidiary to agriculture) such as preservation of fruits and vegetables, canning of meat, processing of oil, fibre, paddy, etc. should be encouraged on a home to home and village to village basis.

Uniformity and quality of the products should be specially cared for in all spheres of village and small-scale industries. Marketing of products, purchase of raw materials, etc. should be organized through mutual-aid societies and cooperatives.

In the national plan, the role of village and small-scale industries is estimated as highly significant especially in providing goods for consumption when the large-scale sector is concentrating on heavy industries. This throws a challenge to all, irrespective of whether they are ideologically in favour of giving a permanent place to the village industries in the national economy or not, to help the sector of village and small-scale industries to fulfil maximum productivity. However, economic progress requires that care should be taken that large vested interests are not formed round village industries whose present productive efficiency is low. Such interests if allowed to grow beyond a certain limit, may become a fetter on development.

Social institutions of caste and the rigid structure of occupational distribution, sanctified by religion, have long stood in the way of economic development. The experience of field workers has brought out the fact that with the modernization and introduction of new techniques of production, the caste and occupational correlation is no more a static phenomenon. However, economic progress requires a greater degree of social mobility than is obtained at present in the village.

II. Social Goals of Development

The Consultation considered the following questions:

1) What are and what should be the social goals of rural community development in India?

2) In the light of the national ideal of a secular democratic State and a socialistic pattern of society, what is the pattern of changes we should envisage in rural social institutions and organizations?

3) What kind of religious and cultural motivation should be necessary for the development of a healthy rural community? What are the successes and failures of the different development agencies at work in regard to providing this motivation?

4) What is the contribution of the Church and Christian agencies towards the above?

The group discussed as to what is meant by "Social Goals". Is it possible to exclude the economic aspect in discussing social goals? Does it refer to the relation of the individual to the society or does it pertain to the effect of society on the development of the individual? Does setting up of social goals mean change of social values?

It was agreed that in discussing the social goals we should be concerned with the type of society that we would like to see evolved. From this point of view the ultimate social goal or rural community development may be defined as follows: "To create such conditions so as to develop a society where each individual has the opportunity for full development of the total person in relation to himself, the home, the community, the nation and God". More specifically it would mean that the society be such in which each individual has full scope for his economic, mental and spiritual development.

New social goals necessarily involve changes in existing social values. We have to analyse the existing social values with a view to see which of them may be retained, and which need to be modified or rejected. Even though some

of the social values may be retained in the new society, the basis of their acceptance as well as their form may have been changed and consequently there is need to educate the people about the significance of these values in the new social structure. The social values in relation to the family, caste and other social institutions of the community were discussed.

The Family

As far as the institutions of marriage and family are concerned:

1) At present society is paternalistic in nature and as such the man is very dominant. The woman has little to say in matters of the home (finance, children's education, arrangements of marriage, etc.). A home should be such where there is mutual respect between the husband and the wife and also between the parents and the children. Unless freedom in community is realized at the level of the home, it would be very difficult to make it a pattern of national living. A new pattern of family life has to evolve in the context of the new social democratic goals. In this connection it is necessary to indicate that greater enlightenment and knowledge need to be given to the women who have to take an intelligent part in bringing up the children so that they may adjust themselves into the new society that is coming into being.

2) The home should continue to be a place where children receive instruction particularly with reference to the moral values. At present this is being done mostly through the teaching of mythology and legends. The education given in the school being incomplete, there is the need to supplement it at home so as to enable the children to be more responsible members of the society.

3) While the physical basis of the joint-family is breaking, the social and economic bases are being largely maintained. For instance, the provision for the aged, the sick and the handicapped, mutual assistance in time of need, concern for poor relations, etc. are being retained even by those who may have set up small-unit families. However, in the new society that is being evolved, such social security arrangements will be increasingly provided by the State. Since the State is by constitution impersonal, there is a danger in such a society that the human aspects of security and welfare may get lost. Therefore, it should be the special concern of the home, whatever its new pattern of organization be, to uphold these human values within the relationships of the family.

4) Regarding the choice of mate it was felt that guided choice would be better than the traditional arranged marriages where the young people do not have any say in the choice of their partners. There should be cooperation between home, school, Church, and other community organizations in the education of young people for marriage and family living. At present very little is done on these lines.

5) Although child marriage is abolished by law, a great deal more of public support and education are needed, for its effective implementation.

6) While the dowry system should be condemned, there should be just distribution of family property.

Women and Society

It is our conviction that rural society will not be changed for the better until women have a changed outlook for we know that religion and culture are not so much taught as caught. The younger generation catch their attitudes, even their worship and feelings of superiority or inferiority, largely from their mothers. It therefore becomes our responsibility to provide opportunities for women: 1) to learn to read and write their own language, 2) to understand how to keep their families in health, 3) to understand family planning, 4) through the reading of literature and periodicals to drop their superstitions enabling them to create an environment of spiritual religion in the family and the community, and 5) to take up their share of responsibility in the home with respect to (a) discipline (b) planning the family budget, etc.

In order to enable women to make their maximum contribution to a socialistic pattern of society:

1) We suggest that Government and non-Governmental organizations emphasise the importance of women's contribution by opening even more avenues of training and service for women to suit the changing needs of the country.

2) In relation to the Church, we would like to emphasise that much of the old systems of Christian service among women, e.g. Bible woman, is antiquated and inadequate for ever widening needs of an awakening womanhood in a growing democracy. The Church should call forth the best educated for her young women and train them for the various rural community needs and send them forth when they will command respect not only as Christians but as community builders.

Customs

Customs and traditions which are not in conflict with the stated social goals may be continued. It means that these customs should be carefully reexamined and reinterpreted so that they may play a creative part in the evolution of the new social structure. Customs should not be observed merely for the sake of observance without any rational basis. Such customs as personal cleanliness, cleaning of houses, shops, etc., before certain festivals, giving contributions to community institutions (schools, temples, panchayats, etc.) during marriages, births, etc., can make a social contribution in the emerging pattern of community life.

Caste System

The caste system, as it is at present, is recognised by the national community development leadership as a social evil to be removed. Several forces are working against this system. For example, the technological changes bring new patterns of occupations which cut across the rigid occupational structure of caste. The influence of industrial cities and the growing urban class outlook on life tends to dissolve the intimate social relations and reduce the authority of traditional caste leadership. Land reforms, planned economic development, social legislation and social education, all work towards breaking up the exclusiveness of caste segregation. Political factors like adult franchise, prohibition of untouchability, equality before law and fundamental rights make a frontal attack on caste and casteism.

Still we must recognise the fact that caste has deep roots in the social fabric and is not easily dislodged. For several reasons, psychological, socio-

logical and religious, the caste system has a toughness about it. Caste gives a certain moral, emotional and social security because it provides recognition, welfare, sense of belonging and clear direction in matters of behaviour. More than these, the common use of the term "demon of caste" points towards the truth that it is more than sociological in character, that it has spiritual roots. And it has the sanction of traditional religion.

This analysis of the reasons for the strength of the caste system makes it clear why a purely negative approach is doomed to failure. We must find alternative patterns of social ordering and community living which meet the need of men for moral, emotional and social securities as adequately as the caste system and provide religious motivation for these new patterns. This is not easily done. No doubt the State is taking over some of the social and economic welfare functions of the caste and to that extent the new socialistic pattern of society reduces the power of caste. But we have to go a long way to provide an adequate alternative at every level. Ghandhism, Reformed Hinduism and other religious movements may bring religious dynamic to the idea and practice of a casteless society. But these have not yet become real alternatives in the situation. And for a long time, we may have to be satisfied with mitigating such evils of caste as its social rigidity, economic immobility, stark inequality, lack of individual freedom, irresponsible clannishness and parochialism.

It is unfortunate that the Christian Church is not free from caste and its prejudices in its own community life. There is need for Christians to demonstrate both in their religious congregational life and the larger social life, that the Christian message of redemption has power over traditional social evils. The Church has pioneered in the past with experiments in new patterns of community life. When the nation is seeking new viable alternatives to caste, the Church must be able to help in the search and the discovery.

The Education

Education is a very important tool in the building of a new society. Here can be developed a strong sense of community and dignity of labour. In this light Basic Education should be examined and evaluated. Universal compulsory education should be implemented. As far as adults are concerned, there should be a comprehensive programme of social education for the spread of ideas relating to citizenship and for speeding up of the achievement of the new social goals.

Festival

Most of the festivals observed at present are both religious and cultural. There is need for the introduction of more national festivals such as harvest festival, vanmahotsav, etc., which have social, recreational, cultural and educational value.

It must be pointed out here that too many holidays for these festivals result in national economic waste. The new society that is being envisaged has the working man at the base. Hence the national festivals should be of an utilitarian nature. Guidance should be given that they are observed in such a manner as to strengthen the nation building programme.

Social Control

At present social control operates through group pressure. At times it has hindered the development of the individual and his freedom and responsibility. Nevertheless, social control is necessary as it normally has a healthy

influence in society. If at times it hinders necessary social changes, this should be countered by creating public opinion in favour of the change.

Leadership

Conditions at present in the village are not very conducive to the development of constructive leadership. Age, wealth and hereditary factors play a very important role in the determination of leadership. Such a leadership is not in keeping with the ideals of democracy. However, there seems to be a new awakening and at many places the old traditional leadership is being challenged. In some places, the young educated people have been able to assert themselves. This would indicate an awakening in the villages. There is need to channelise this new awakening. New criteria must be found in the emergence of leaders. These should be social achievements, usefulness to the community, education and character. The present is a period of transition and we hope that these new values would become established.

There should be greater participation of women in village affairs. We would even suggest that by law there should be women representation in the panchayats. There is little youth leadership in the villages. The potential leadership in the youth needs to be discovered through youth organizations. A broader outlook should be given to the young people through youth camps and their energies should be vitalised and channelled towards the achieving of social goals.

Methods to achieve the above

1) Greater freedom of expression and opportunity for leadership for all, especially youth and women.

2) Through a process of formal and informal education.

3) By widening the outlook through village reading rooms and study groups, youth camps, educational tours, through mass communications (such as mobile exhibits, mobile libraries, etc.)

4) By encouraging writers to study the social changes taking place in the villages and to write so as to enable the villages to appreciate new ideals. There is need to develop rural journalism. Newspapers and magazines which are appealing to the villagers should be started.

5) By studying folk culture and influencing them so as to relate them to the new social goals. Folk culture penetrates deep into the rural society. If the new social values are to be established in the rural society, they need to become a part of the folk culture.

6) There is at present a migration to cities with the result that the educated of the village go away. Some flow-back is necessary in order to provide for the vacuum created. Inducements should be given for retiring people to go back to the village and settle down. This can be accomplished either by an honorary appointment or the providing of loans for buying lands, building houses, etc.

7) By providing greater physical amenities in the villages such as water, light, health services, etc.

8) Village schools should be used for promoting social goals by making them community centres of activity.

9) If there are no schools, community centres should be established.

10) The radio should be utilized to spread the ideals of the new society. More and more rural people should be used in the radio programmes.

11) The Government publicity at present is mostly of an informative nature. It should be more purposive and educative of the social goals.

12) Family camps should be arranged.

Religious and Cultural Motivation

Social values should be based on, or related to an absolute truth. Otherwise, social values will have no foundation. Secularism is not sufficient in itself to develop a new culture. In this sense, a religious basis is essential for social values to endure.

We recognize the importance and significance of religion to provide moral and spiritual basis for the life of the individual. Hence religious freedom should be provided in any new society. The society should also be one which is able to tolerate more than one religion within it. The misuse of religion for either personal or communal gains is to be strongly condemned.

The following motivations are necessary in order to achieve the new social goals:

1) Motivation for a higher material living - value for material things.

2) Motivation for individuality - respect for persons.

3) Motivation for mutual responsibility - the principle of cooperation.

4) Motivation for moral integrity - relationship between belief and practice.

5) Motivation for the suspicion of power - realism in dealing with the problem of power, its necessity and its corruption.

The following are some of the organizations which are working for realising the new social goals:

1) The Community Projects Administration which is motivated to a large extent by Secular Humanism. The Profession of Social Work is also motivated by this faith. While it has a creative role to play in criticising false religious attitudes and in emphasising man's capacities, Secular Humanism does not do justice to the spiritual, that is trans-social, dimensions of man's life and is not therefore able to recreate its dynamic.

2) The Sarvodaya movement has its motivation in its acceptance of truth and non-violence as eternal values. Its emphasis on the moral foundation of society is a necessary basis of freedom and community. In certain forms the Sarvodaya movement has not given substantial motivation for material development. However, the Sarvodaya movement has provided a dynamic to social change.

3) Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Missions have their motivation from a reinterpreted Hinduism. Reformed Hinduism has its faith in a modified Advaida. It has related the new sense of social mission to the deepest religious ideas of the Hindu. However, it is a question whether it can do full justice to human individuality, the new urge for material progress, and purposive history.

Note: The Dravida Kazhagom has a rationalistic approach to culture and is militantly anti-religious. There is a large element of secular humanism also in its ideology. Its protest against the religious sanctions of caste and other social evils and its emphasis on the rationality of man have helped to bring self-respect to the oppressed. The RSS and Marxist groups have awakened the nation to the need for religious motivation and social reform respectively. But they are not considered here because they have little social welfare work in rural parts.

The Christian Contribution

1) The Christian can contribute towards the appreciation of higher material living - The Word made flesh.

2) The idea of reverence for the personality of man - Brother for whom Christ died.

3) The idea of Community derived from the congregational nature of the Church. Christian life is not a private affair between a man and his Maker, but a social life under the Lordship of Christ.

4) The Cross and the Resurrection are the core of the Christian faith, and as such, Christian thought can make a great contribution to the appreciation of the tragic aspect of the moral life of man, and the spiritual roots of self-love. They can also provide hope beyond the tragedy because of the Resurrection.

We do not claim that the Church has appropriated these Christian resources for its social witness. The Church should repent of its failure to do so.

When we talk of the Christian contribution it must be noted that this can be made through the life and witness of a rural congregation. Christian agencies at work in rural areas or through participation of individual Christians in State and non-Christian rural projects. The Church at times has not provided the necessary spiritual fellowship for Christian individuals in rural social work. This is a necessary task of the Church. In fact the Church has yet to awaken fully to its responsibility in society. It is also to be remembered that this social contribution will be more effective when there is a greater indigenization of the Church. The whole structure and worship of the Church need rethinking in relation to its social mission. The Christian agencies may have a specific contribution with reference to the methods of approach. But these and the Church, should work in greater collaboration among themselves and with State projects and non-Christian agencies.

III. State Initiative, Voluntary Effort and Foreign Assistance

State Initiative

A democratic State is the servant of the people which implies a responsiveness to need and to action which is helpful in meeting need. A welfare State is concerned with the welfare of all and we recognise that State action may be required under varying circumstances, in most fields of human endeavour. However, we regard it as the function of the State to make possible the fullest life for the individual and the widest expression of the potentialities of man working in association with his fellow men, for various socially good purposes.

The State should recognise that there are many fields of activity relating to the development of rural areas which can best be undertaken by non-State agencies. Therefore, non-State agencies or organizations already doing such functions should be encouraged by the State giving financial and other aid without interfering with the normal functioning of such agencies. Where non-State action is lacking or absent, the State should take the initiative, or create conditions, under which non-official agencies could either expand their existing activity or take up new activity within the over-all regular functions of the State.

In the field of rural development, it is clear that large scale capital improvements must be undertaken by the State - for example, river valley dams to provide irrigation, communications, technical services, etc. State action in community improvement which may be necessary now, should be applied in such a way as to encourage the development of group action and local self-government leading to a decentralization of power. We particularly have in mind such institutions as panchayats, cooperatives, village development committees and the like.

We recognise that paternalism is not conducive to the growth of sound democratic action and that voluntary groups, as well as the State, have to guard against it. We recognise also that the desire to get quick results is as much a failing of voluntary effort as of government action, though the pressure to produce tangible results is now greater and far more dangercus in the case of Government action.

Where State initiative becomes all-pervading, planning begins at the top and tends to be imposed at the village level. Planning is desirable and necessary but should result, as far as possible, as the coordinated expression of need and desire from the village level upwards. This can only take place when local institutions have been encouraged and assisted to participate responsibly in community development.

We recognise that social legislation can be a valuable instrument of change. We should support and even help inspire such legislation and assist in its interpretation and implementation.

Voluntary Effort

We appreciate the tremendous effort made by the Government during the past few years to meet the pressing needs of village people. We are convinced that much good is coming from this large scale effort and would call upon voluntary groups in general and Christian Church groups in particular to cocperate freely in making this effort fully successful. Especially in voicing the felt desires of the people, there is a special role for voluntary organizations.

There is no question of the need for the continuance of voluntary effort in the field of rural community development. It should be strengthened and expanded and a high quality of service sought after. As State initiative aiming at material improvements increases, so should voluntary work concentrate on the complementary spiritual and social aspects in which the voluntary agencies alone can make a lasting contribution. Voluntary groups should be concerned with the development of personality and character, the improvement of human relationships in the home and in the village, and in training for good citizenship. In a broad context, the contribution of voluntary groups should be educational and in bringing knowledge, understanding and above all, inspiration and ideals. They have a vital role to play in maintaining an area of freedom for the spirit in national development plans and defending it against the natural tendencies of planners to invade it.

One of the strengths of voluntary effort lies in its potentiality for pioneering and experimentation. It is essential that such work is, in fact, continually pioneering and experimenting and in the vanguard of new possibilities for the solution of village problems.

The Christian Church has in the past responded to the challenge of rural India. At this time when the whole nation is awake to this challenge, the Church and the Christian agencies should rethink their role and the nature of their special contribution, not merely as pioneers but also as humbly cooperating in the national movement to the fullest extent possible. The Christian service has always been available to all rural people irrespective of caste and creed. We re-emphasise this principle namely, that the Christian Church exists to serve the whole rural community and not only the Christians. Rural Christian work must set increasingly higher standards of service and seek improved human relationships as its goal.

Foreign Assistance

From the time rural development programme was started by voluntary agencies, foreign initiative, foreign personnel and foreign funds have been utilized. Since Independence, foreign Foundations and foreign Governments have also come to the aid of both government and voluntary agencies for development projects in an increasing measure. We believe that while the initiative should be primarily national in the present context, there is a place for continued foreign assistance in rural work, both of funds and personnel service.

The basic motivation behind this programme of aid has been and still is concern for people. In practice all motives are mixed; religious, cultural, ideological and political motives are seen in every aid. Especially in a situation where the aid is given and received between Nation States which are different in cultural outlook and political foreign policy, or between institutions in these Nation States, there are bound to be questions as to whether the aid is disinterested. In realistic terms we must accept the fact that motives of political self-interest play a part in all international assistance. There are degrees of difference between aid given by a foreign State and that given by a foreign voluntary agency in this motivation. No doubt, the aid given by a foreign State is likely to have more political motivation than that by foreign voluntary agencies or philanthropic or missionary groups; the cultural influence may be more predominating in the latter. In any case the important thing for both the giving and receiving Nation States or voluntary agencies within them is to see that political and cultural motivation does not express itself in the machinery of aid so as to jeopardize independent judgement and action of receiving nation or voluntary agency. In this sense, foreign assistance should be without strings attached.

Often it is difficult for a foreign government or agency to appreciate the social goals and pattern of India's rural development, especially at this time of national awakening. This may be due to several reasons including differences in culture. Therefore, if foreign assistance is to be geared to the indigenous aspirations, the control of foreign funds, choice of personnel and the direction of programme should be in the hands of indigenous groups sensitive to national goals. We should not, however, forget that there are indigenous groups whose outlook is unrelated to the new awakening and foreign persons who have identified themselves with it more than many Indians.

Sometimes foreign funds are applied to projects where discontinuance of aid retards progress or leaves institutions which cannot be maintained within the available resources. There is also a danger of choosing unwholesome projects on the basis of its cultural and financial appeal to the giver. This is to be guarded against specially at village level. Workers in the field have a responsibility to see that funds are applied only in a form and at a level where they can enhance self-reliance, increase indigenous productivity and achieve the greatest good to the rural community. They should keep in mind that institutional structures should be simple enough so that indigenous resources may take them over when the foreign aid ceases. Indeed, indigenous resources in personnel and finance should be tapped to the utmost even as foreign aid is being utilized so as to prepare for a healthy future. Foreign funds can be usefully allocated to such projects as training of personnel, helping indigenous forms of experimentation and research, and pioneering work.

There is still a real need for personal service on both short term and long term basis. Short term basis is more likely to prove beneficial when the person concerned has some technical skill to offer. In such cases the primary function of the foreign expert should be to train local talent. Such experts should make an earnest effort to be sensitive to the indigenous cultural values as well as to quickly acquaint himself with the past local effort in his field. The long term personal service should be based on a greater sense of dedication in the service of the people and a more complete identification with them. In both cases it is essential that the person and his family have sympathetic understanding of men of other cultures and are capable of adjustment to new social environments.

Failures have sometimes been due to lack of proper orientation of the foreign personnel as well as of the local groups among whom such persons work. Adequate facilities for orientation are urgently needed if persons of different cultures are to live and work together in harmony in the service of the people. Even then tensions are likely to occur and only a development of relations at the personal level of mutual understanding, of love and forgiveness, can overcome them. The Church in India can foster this kind of relationship if it welcomes the foreign personnel whether of government or voluntary agency into its fellowship wherever possible.

In the case of foreign technical personnel the political suspicion will be greatly reduced if they are sponsored by international agencies like the United Nations, Commonwealth, etc. So also where missionary personnel from different countries and different denominations cooperate in an united Christian endeavour it reduces tensions and helps common witness. In rural work, as perhaps in other fields, this is a step very urgently needed.

Churches in more economically developed areas have a duty to educate their members regarding the developmental plans in the underdeveloped areas and the opportunities they provide for Christians to offer themselves within programmes

of technical assistance sponsored under State, UNO and voluntary auspices. The Churches in India and other countries of Asia participate in the ecumenical movement which provides a community of trust and confidence. This adds to the responsibility to help ease tensions arising within international cooperation and help evolve new forms of inter-dependence among the nations. But it must be remembered that Christian participation in the world Christian community is likely to be suspect, especially by aggressive narrow nationalism. Therefore a special effort is needed to demonstrate in life and work that ecumenism is the true basis of healthy nationalism.